

From the Current Articles of Incorporation & Bylaws, June 20, 1981

updated July 13, 2006

The purposes of the Sierra Club are to explore, enjoy, and protect the wild places of the earth; to practice and promote the responsible use of the earth's ecosystems and resources; to educate and enlist humanity to protect and restore the quality of the natural and human environment; and to use all lawful means to carry out these objectives.

Beliefs about Environment and Society – Developed by Planning Committee and printed in Sierra Club Goals Pamphlet, 1985-1989, with Board knowledge, but not formally adopted by it

Humans have evolved as an interdependent part of nature. Humankind has a powerful place in the environment, which may range from steward to destroyer. We must share the Earth's finite resources with other living things and respect all life-enabling processes. Thus, we must control human population numbers and seek a balance that serves all life forms.

Complex and diversified ecosystems provide stability for the Earth's life support processes. Development and other human activities can simplify ecosystems, undermine their dynamic stability, and threaten these processes. Wildness itself has a value serving all species, with too few remaining. We have more to fear from too little wildness than from too much.

Genetic diversity is the product of evolution acting on wildness, and is important because it is biological capital for future evolution. We must preserve genetic diversity in wild tracts and gene pools. No species should be hastened into extinction by human intervention.

The needs of all creatures must be respected, their destinies viewed as separate from human desires, their existence not simply for human benefit. All species have a right to perpetuation of the habitat necessary and required for survival. All creatures should have freedom from needless predation, persecution, and cruel or unduly confining captivity. We must seek moral restraints on human power to affect the well-being of so many species.

Humans must exercise stewardship of the Earth's resources to assure enough for other creatures and for the future. Thus, resources should be renewed indefinitely wherever possible, and resource depletion limited. Resources should be used as long as possible and shared, avoiding waste and needless consumption. We must act knowledgeably and take precautions to avoid initiating irreversible trends. Good stewardship implies a shared moral and social responsibility to take positive action on behalf of conservation.

The enjoyment of the natural environment and the Earth's wild places is a fundamental purpose of the Club, and an end in itself.

Ideal Goals (Summary) – for Environment and Society

To sustain natural life-support systems, avoid impairing them, and avoid irreversible damage to them.

To facilitate species survival; to maintain genetic diversity; to avoid hastened extinction of species; to protect prime natural habitat.

To establish and protect natural reserves, including representative natural areas, wilderness areas in each biome, displays of natural phenomena, and habitats for rare and endangered species.

To control human population growth and impacts; to limit human population numbers and habitat needs within Earth's carrying capacity; to avoid needless human consumption of resources; to plan and control land use, with environmental impact assessment and safeguards, and rehabilitation of damaged sites.

To learn more about the facts, interrelationships, and principles of the Earth's ecosystems, and the place and impact of humans in them; to understand the consequences of human activities within the biosphere.

To develop responsible and appropriate technology matched to end-uses; to introduce sophisticated technology gradually after careful assessment and with precautionary monitoring.

To control pollution of the biosphere; to minimize waste residuals with special care of hazardous materials; to use the best available control technology at sources; and to recycle wastes.

To manage resources soundly; to avoid waste with long-term plans; to sustain the yield of living resources and maintain their productivity and breeding stocks; to prolong availability of nonliving resources such as fossil fuels, minerals, and water.

To impart a sense of social responsibility among consumers, developers, and public authorities concerning environmental protection; to regulate threats to public health; to avoid private degradation of public resources; to minimize impacts on innocent parties and future generations.

For The Sierra Club Organization

To acquire the knowledge, skills, resources, and energy to accomplish the Club's goals for environment and society.

To render service through ability to promote societal well-being; through improving environmental conditions and maintaining environmental quality; through equipping members with understanding, training and motivation to be effective in improving environmental quality; to advance public education; to foster appreciation of outdoor experience and responsible outdoor behavior.

To have the following characteristics: to be energetic, actively moving projects to completion, catalyzing action, and using the most modern and efficient tools available; to be effective, able to achieve results in a knowledgeable and responsible manner; to possess a breadth of interest and vision encompassing any problem of the physical environment; to be willing to take risks; to be persistent in pursuit of Club causes; to see the Club itself as making history, and thus take a long view; to be cooperative with all who are working toward the same ends; to reflect excellence in Club publications; to be innovative in exploring new means toward Club goals.

To be constituted to reflect a carefully balanced and integrated variety of approaches – democratic, grassroots, decentralized -- yet with a strong central core; to foster flexibility, initiative, and collaboration within a central framework of cohesiveness; to respect expertise of its various entities; to consult broadly among its entities and decide consensually but promptly, with decisions reflecting thorough and serious deliberation; while being basically a membership organization of volunteers, to work closely with professional and support staff; to define the roles of volunteers and staff clearly; to enhance effectiveness through enjoyment of social interaction between volunteers and staff; to be modern while retaining traditions and a sense of the past; to provide an example of good conduct and high standards for the Club and society.

To assure that the public perceives the Club as "the guardian of the environment"; as a leading force in key struggles for the environment in every area; as a powerful force which energizes campaigns and achieves its goals; and as a constructive force with a positive sense for meeting society's needs.

To obtain the necessary and sufficient resources to fulfill the Club's purposes, including:

(1) To have a membership large enough to fulfill the Club's purposes and be credible in comparison with other organizations which aspire to be social forces, and large enough to be taken seriously by leaders in national political life; to develop wide-ranging competence among its members on issues; to generate a leadership capable of acting effectively on a great many issues; to produce annual revenues and net worth sufficient to meet its goals; to have geographical distribution of members; to have member representation in political units in the United States and Canada; to have members of varied ages, interests, and backgrounds; to have members who can provide expertise to address diverse issues, with widely varied professional and technical backgrounds and experience.

(2) To have a staff large enough and with sufficient professional capacity to provide services to support member operations, and undertake specific staff programs such as lobbying, publications, and outings; staff should share the Club's basic values and assist volunteers in the pursuit of Club goals.

(3) To have financial resources to finance the Club's operations at all levels; to have income from diverse sources; to build a net worth sufficient to allow financing of annual operations without borrowing, and ultimately representing at least half the annual operating budget.

(4) To have the best possible information resources and systems available to guide and support Club actions; to have information which is sophisticated, current, accurate, in context, and accessible; to have a mix of news, intelligence, fundamental knowledge, theory, and plans; to maintain the institutions necessary to collect and disseminate this information, including a library, newsletters, various communications mechanisms, and links to existing information networks.

Vision Statement for the Sierra Club's Second Century, Board of Directors, September 16-17, 1989

The Challenge

We are facing a global environmental crisis that grows more urgent every day. Threats that were once inconceivable -- such as massive oil spill disasters, global climate change, and the poisoning of our air, land and water -- are becoming common events. Species are being annihilated and wilderness is being destroyed at an alarming and accelerating rate.

We live each day knowing that in a few generations -- unless humankind takes drastic steps to protect our planet -- it is possible that the Earth will hurtle around the Sun devoid of life as we know it.

There is no priority more urgent than saving the Earth.

Our Vision

For nearly 100 years, Sierra Club members have shared a vision of humanity living in harmony with the Earth.

We envision a world where wilderness areas and open spaces are protected habitats sustaining all species ... a world where oceans and streams are clean and the air is pure ... a world where a healthy biosphere and a nontoxic environment are inalienable rights. In short, we envision a world saved from the threat of unalterable planetary disaster.

To save our planet, we must change the world –

Priorities must change: People must learn to live in ways that preserve and protect our precious resources.

Policies must change: Our institutions must abandon practices that recklessly endanger the environment.

Values must change: Progress must be measured by its long-term value to living systems and creatures rather than its short-term value to special interests or the economy.

To achieve this vision, people across the nation and around the world must speak out with a powerful voice that cannot be ignored. Aggressive grassroots action on an unprecedented scale is essential to protect our environment and our species. There is no other choice. It will require leadership that is visionary, experienced, and strong.

Our Role

The Sierra Club is uniquely qualified to lead this grassroots action to save the Earth. We are America's largest and most effective grassroots environmental organization -- an experienced, respected and committed fellowship of citizen activists. Within our ranks lie the expertise, wisdom, and vitality to find the new directions needed to meet the challenges of the future.

We offer proven ability to influence public policy and empower individuals to confront local, national, and global problems. From town halls to our nation's capital to global institutions, Sierra Club activists are scoring enormous victories for the environment through personal action, education, litigation, lobbying, and participation in the political process.

As the Sierra Club prepares for its second century, we offer to America and the world our vision of humanity living in harmony with nature. We dedicate ourselves to achieving this vision as we reaffirm our passionate commitment to explore, enjoy, and protect the Earth.

Statement of Purposes, Development by the Planning Committee in 1985; amended by the Board of Directors, May 5-6, 1990

For purposes of planning, the Sierra Club's purpose, thus, is to preserve, protect, and enhance the natural environment.

The mission of the Sierra Club is to influence public, private and corporate policies and actions through Club programs at the local, state, national and international levels.

The strategy of the Sierra Club is to activate appropriate portions of a network of staff, members, and other concerned citizens, using legislative, administrative, electoral, and legal approaches, and to develop supporting public opinion.

Strategic Goals, Board of Directors, May 1-2, 1993

The following goals guide the Club's work:

- I. Enhance public perception of "environment" (overcome the perception of limits):
 - A. Develop pressure by consumers for green products.
 - B. Educate public that strong environmental protection creates jobs.
 - C. Reduce consumption levels in the U.S. through increasing efficiency, recycling, producing more durable goods, and by making waste and non-essential products and packaging socially unacceptable.

- II. Build upon and develop new forms of political leverage:
 - A. Mobilize market incentives to induce corporate environmental change.
 - B. Develop hybrid or "coordinated campaigns," targeting multiple levels of decision making.
 - C. Work to make existing institutions more responsive and accountable to community and environmental needs.
 - D. Create new vehicles for responsive institutions of government.
 - E. Develop unconventional alliances to overcome legislative obstacles.

- III. Integrate concerns for environmental protection and social justice to strengthen the environmental movement:
 - A. Develop more effective means for communicating through race, class, age, and cultural barriers.
 - B. Re-position the Sierra Club as more visibly concerned about threats to community and workplace environments.
 - C. Encourage more extensive coalition work between local Sierra Club entities and environmental justice groups.
 - D. Develop a stronger capacity to influence state and local regulatory and land-use actions (particularly as these relate to pollution threats to vulnerable groups in our society and land uses they find unacceptable).

- IV. Enhance the Club's position of leadership within the environmental movement:
 - A. Continue to develop programs to cultivate and train new leaders.
 - B. Nurture a culture within the Club that encourages cooperation and collaboration, and that rewards innovative ideas and contributions.
 - C. Significantly enhance our ability for "quick responses" to issues and challenges.
 - D. Strengthen the Club's public affairs capacity for "telling our story."

Sierra Club Promise, Board of Directors, November 20-21, 1993

As a Sierra Club member you are empowered to help save the Earth and enjoy the natural world around you.

JOIN OUR CRUSADE

Get involved

Help resolve ... critical community, national and global environmental challenges.

Philosophy of Service and Stewardship, Board of Directors, September 16-17, 1995

To achieve its mission, the Sierra Club has organized persons of shared environmental concerns into a powerful and effective force for protecting the natural environment. As a grassroots-based organization, we rely on individuals for our resources, talent, and energy. Our members are our most important assets.

We are the Sierra Club. We are members helping other members. We trust and respect members and acknowledge their full range of contributions.

Good Stewardship is:

- * providing members with a supportive environment that allows them to determine their relationship with the Club.
- * facilitating each member's involvement in the organization at the level the member desires.
- * entailing the wise and careful use of the member's time, energy, and resources.
- * providing Club members with the materials, information, expertise, and other resources that will strengthen their relationship with the organization.
- * creating the foundation that makes it possible for the Club to fulfill its mission now – and in the future.

Sierra Club “Premise” Poster, presented to the Board November 13-14, 1999, by the Communication & Education GovCom

This is not about getting back to nature. It is about understanding we've never left.

We are deep in our nature every day. We're up to our ears in it. It is under our feet, it is in our lungs, it runs through our veins. We are not visitors here. We weren't set down to enjoy the view. We were born here and we're part of it -- like any ant, fish, rock, or blade of grass.

This connection is as personal as it is fundamental. It can't be proved with theorems and diagrams. You either feel it or you don't.

Sierra Club members feel it.

Maybe it came to you on a mountain trail, or on a river bank, or at a windowsill watching a spider's unthinking intelligence unfold. Simply put, it's the sudden

conviction that there is something out there, something wonderful. And it is much, much bigger than you.

A revelation like this could easily overwhelm a person. We choose to let it inspire us. Nature, vastly complex and infinitely subtle, is our perfect metaphor. Related to everything, signifying everything, it is the spring where we go to renew our spirit. And it, in turn, asks something of us. It compels us to take responsibility and then to take action.

Look, there is nothing inevitable about the future of our environment. A poisoned stream can get worse, stay the same, or get better. It depends largely on what we choose to do. That simple belief, backed by 100 years of effort and result, is what drives the Sierra Club.

So, forget the grim cliché of the selfless environmentalist. When you accept your connection to nature, suddenly you can't look at the world without seeing something very personal in it. You are part of it, and you work for the planet because it gives you joy to do so.

You work for the planet because you belong to it.

Organizational and Issues Goals, Board of Directors, November 19-20, 2005

Organizational

In order to build grassroots power in our communities for achieving the Club's objectives related to our conservation initiatives, the Board of Directors adopts the following capacity-building priorities for 2006-2010. The Board asks all Club entities to contribute to the development of these capacities, not exclusively, but as top priorities identified through the Summit Direction Setting Process. The Board further directs staff and Governance Committees to work with grassroots activists to develop appropriate tools and support to:

- (1) Build Club capacity to: – Seek new allies and build coalitions to bring different perspectives together around common interests, and build political and community momentum around shared concerns and values.
- (2) Build Club capacity to: – Create media visibility through reporters, editors and news coverage, visibility events, advertising, and other media access and outlets that put our point of view in the public eye and public debate.
- (3) Build Club capacity to: – Organize people in our communities to take action together in their neighborhoods and homes, through local networking, groups, and gatherings that build our activist numbers, strength and diversity.
- (4) Build Club capacity to: – Enlist public support with messages framed around solutions. Take our message out to people in our communities with materials, presentations, and public education framed around solutions that the public can

understand, relate to and act on.

The Board of Directors affirms its commitment to the proposition that a key way the Sierra Club can fulfill its national purpose at this point in time is to invest its financial, staff, and moral resources in developing the capacity of its leaders, enhancing its organizational capacity, and conducting programs of effective local action – rekindling the movement that the Sierra Club played such a key role in launching. We affirm that development of the Club's volunteer leadership and the chapters and groups they lead is a critical investment in the strength of the organization as a whole and the environmental movement more broadly.

In order to build grassroots power for achieving the Club's objectives related to our Conservation Initiatives, the Board of Directors identifies four groups of priority decision-makers for 2006 to 2010. We wish to grow our capacity to influence (1) voters, (2) state officials, and (3) local officials, and maintain our present capacity to influence (4) federal officials.

Issues

The Board of Directors adopts three long-term National Conservation Initiatives for 2006-2010. They are: (1) Smart Energy Solutions, (2) Safe and Healthy Communities, and (3) America's Wild Legacy.

These three Conservation Initiatives will be the centerpieces of our national conservation agenda for the next five years. The single most important goal of this agenda will be to advance a smart, safe, clean energy future in the next decade.

To maximize success, the Conservation Governance Committee and the staff should seek out and give preference to projects and programs that overlap and provide synergy between these three initiatives.

These Conservation Initiatives represent the national conservation agenda that the Sierra Club Board has chosen for focused work over the next five years. They were selected after reviewing the Sierra Summit and pre-Summit direction setting process results from the grassroots leadership and the Summit delegates.

Each initiative will eventually have specific goals, values, action objectives, and public policy outcomes selected to implement them. All Governance Committees and national staff are encouraged to work together to implement these Conservation Initiatives.

Clarification of Conservation Initiatives and their Emphases for 2006-2010, Board of Directors, March 4-5, 2006

The Sierra Club's 114-year history reflects a rich blend of activism and unifying campaigns. Over the last decades, periods of mobilization and focus have represented some of the Club's finest moments, and yielded some of our proudest victories: the Alaska Lands Act, Wild Forest campaign, the replacement of James Watt, the Superfund battle of 1986, California Desert Protection Campaign, the defeat of Newt Gingrich's Contract with America, and our 26-year long defense of the Arctic Refuge.

Now, we have the opportunity to distinguish ourselves again and to lead once more.

2006-2010 Conservation Initiatives

In November 2005, the Board of Directors adopted three long-term conservation initiatives for the Sierra Club – Smart Energy Solutions, America's Wild Legacy, and Safe and Healthy Communities.

Two of these three – America's Wild Legacy and Safe and Healthy Communities – have been part of the Sierra Club's priority conservation work for decades. In adopting them as Conservation Initiatives for 2006-2010, the Board declared its commitment to our continued leadership in these areas.

In contrast, the Sierra Club has not historically made broad energy policy a national priority campaign. Energy, historically, has been a less central and more episodic Club focus. But the times demand that we meet the challenge to move beyond a fossil fuel world and that the Club lead society through one of the largest transformational moments in American history.

The Club's leadership role in confronting global warming and transforming our energy economy advances not only the Club's Smart Energy vision, but our work for America's Wild Legacy and Safe and Healthy Communities as well. The Club must lead America in this moment; there is no other organization with the history, vision, and presence at the community level to play that role.

At the same time, the Club's highest priority for the next decade as an institution is to build its capacity and focus on Smart Energy Solutions. This is the Conservation Initiative where our existing capacities and abilities are least well developed. As a result, we want to identify those opportunities that address the threats from climate change and can contribute to effective solutions where our members live. In building support for this priority, we want to be promoting Smart Energy Solutions in our trainings, communications channels, fundraising, political work, activist outings, and other available opportunities. We ask and encourage all to participate in an early opportunity around Earth Day 2006. It will be our first opportunity to showcase, for example, our Cool Cities program around the country.

Engaging Our Members and Programs in Our Conservation Initiatives

The Board of Directors re-affirms the importance of all three Conservation Initiatives, and the need for the Club to provide support for volunteers and staff working on the Areas of National Concern in all three of these initiatives.

The Board, therefore, requests its Governance Committees, their sub-entities, all programs, and chapters and groups to assess and enhance their readiness to meet our new challenges, especially that of Smart Energy Solutions. The Board further encourages these same entities, as well as members, to join us at this critical time to build public sentiment to achieve all of our conservation initiatives.

In going forward, we are requesting staff and volunteer leaders at all levels to make available the Club's time, expertise, and resources in a way that supports the successful implementation of our Smart Energy Initiative as a truly powerful, effective, and fully integrated campaign, while retaining the Sierra Club's engagement and involvement across the full range of our Conservation Initiatives.